

Higher Learning Commission
Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units

Non-Instructional Unit: **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP)**

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: [Denise Ehlen](#)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).

The mission and over-arching goal of RSP is to “coordinate efforts to secure funding to support institutional goals and faculty/staff scholarly activity” (RSP Strategic Plan, 2003). Main areas of responsibility include administration, coordination of University of Wisconsin funding opportunities, liaison/professional development, funding identification, proposal development, and compliance. The main activities associated with each area are outlined in [Appendix 1](#).

2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)

- Faculty and academic staff: 250 per annum
- Undergraduate and Graduate students (engaged in research): 40 per annum
- Intramural grant review committees: Academic Staff Professional Development Committee, Academic Development Committee, and the RSP Advisory Board (all comprised of university faculty, academic staff, and classified staff).
- Compliance committees (Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and Institutional Ethics Committee).

3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

Human Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit’s ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between “1” (completely inadequate) to “9” (completely satisfies needs).

5 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you’ve assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The current organization and funding of RSP is inadequate to continue service-intensive functions (finding funding opportunities, assisting with proposal development and project budget development, management of compliance, and day-to-day administration). The client base for the office has grown beyond the resource capacity. Nationally, institutions similar to UWW submitted 48.95 proposals per central sponsored projects administrative FTE in 2002 (as reported in the Higher Education Benchmarking Survey on Research Administration, a copy of the full report is available from RSP upon request). RSP, an office with one FTE, coordinated the submission of 251 proposals.

Grant-related responsibilities should be coordinated by three professional FTE—a director of grant support services (academic staff position, added in October 2004), a project manager (academic staff position, currently filled by a limited term employee⁴), and an administrative specialist (classified, approved in November 2004, currently vacant). Two additional professional and permanent FTE are needed for efficiency and consistency in service. In addition, High-stakes tasks cannot and should not (continue to) be delegated to student employees. Appropriate clerical duties (for example, web development and maintenance, data entry, duplicating, etc.) would continue to be coordinated by graduate (one FTE) and undergraduate students.

Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

5 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The space currently allocated to Research and Sponsored Programs is sufficient for THE current staffing plan. However, space limitations preclude future growth. Service to faculty and staff would be enhanced if the pre- and post-award offices were located in closer geographic proximity (the Financial Services' grant accountant, the post-award service provider, is currently located in Hyer Hall).

Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

9 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

Fiscal resources have been allocated and aligned with the Office's goals and objectives beginning in 2003-2004 under the leadership of Interim Dean of Graduate Studies, Continuing Education, and Summer Session, John Stone.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.)

Staffing and fiscal support for Research and Sponsored Programs declined dramatically in 1998 with the development of the LEARN Center. One FTE (associate dean for Research and Sponsored Programs) and more than 50% of the Office's budget were reallocated to the LEARN Center while no commensurate decrease in unit goals was realized. The School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education began a process during the 2003-2004 academic year to realign unit goals and resources (see earlier resource questions for additional clarification).

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

The School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education engaged in the OPR process in 2003 leading to direct changes in Research and Sponsored Programs infrastructure and resources (see [Appendix 2](#), RSP Self Study and [Appendix 3](#), the OPR Report for additional clarification).

MISSION & PLANNING

5. In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

RSPro

The Research Scholars Program (*RSPro*) is modeled after the successful University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teaching Scholars Program developed by John Stone, Stephen Friedman, and Greg Valde. *RSPro* is an intensive, year-long program designed to help tenure-track faculty enhance scholarly productivity and assist them in developing a research record appropriate to securing promotion and tenure.

While participants will likely find their own motives for engaging in the program, the Research Scholars Program is designed to:

- Increase faculty knowledge of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater support mechanisms for research development, research, and grant writing;
- Develop collegial relationships among tenure-track faculty from across campus;
- Champion and support individual faculty conducting research;
- Assist faculty in disseminating their research (producing a conference paper or publication); and
- Support faculty efforts to extend and continue their research (develop competitive grant proposals).

eRA Initiative

Excellence Grant funding (\$10,000) has been secured to support an electronic research administration (eRA) initiative. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs' mission is to facilitate the procurement of external support through research grants, contracts, and technical assistance agreements; to administer internal support for scholarly activity; and to document and publicize the scholarly achievements of members of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater community. A key RSP goal is to provide technical assistance to faculty and staff on pre- and post-award activities related to external funding. Results from the 2004 OPR Stakeholder Survey and two Fall 2004 Faculty Forums indicate that additional services must be provided pre- and post-award to promote sponsored projects activity. Given institutional fiscal restraints, a cost-effective grant support mechanism is necessary to ensure continued increases in institutional activity.

The Excellence Grant will fund the development and implementation of a dynamic and flexible electronic research administration (eRA) system to support the procurement and administration of external funds. A knowledge portal will be developed that will:

- provide pre- and post-award online and hybrid training modules in a number of key skill areas (grant writing, compliance, and grant administration);
- develop a clearinghouse of answers to frequently asked questions, best practices, and relevant policies and procedures; and
- create a community of scholars and potential grant writers engaged in the extramural funding process.

Web Redesign

One of the mid-range goals of RSP is to enhance current and develop new electronic research administration solutions to maximize efficiency. Activities include:

- Enhance Web-based resources—calendar of deadlines/events, forms, policies and procedures, etc. [2005-2008]
- Develop web-based proposal and award processing system (2006-2007).
- Create discipline-specific grant opportunity resources through redesign of the RSP Web (2005-2006) and launch of SMARTS (Spring 2005).

Faculty PREP

As part of the unit’s continued effort to support faculty scholars, funding has been secured to support a new intramural grant initiative. The Faculty Proposal and Research Enhancement Program (Faculty PREP) is supported by funding from the campus, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Foundation. For 2005-2006, funds have been secured to support projects that allow faculty to compete for external funding and/or effect significant change in the campus culture and on academic practices.

The face of academic funding has changed substantially in the last few years. Continued decreases in public support of higher education and budget pressures at the federal level promise a more competitive environment in the future. The unit has a responsibility to assist Whitewater’s scholars in meeting the ever-evolving ethos of the research task and the institution’s mission in order to effectively compete in this environment. Faculty PREP will provide the resources necessary to ensure Whitewater faculty continue to compete for external funding and engage in scholarship.

The purpose of Faculty PREP is to provide funding to support projects that address select high priority university initiatives. Proposals will be accepted in five categories:

- Initiative 1: Fund for Evaluation and Assessment Projects,
- Initiative 2: Entrepreneurial Development Fund,
- Initiative 3: Fund to Encourage Extramural Grant Activity,
- Initiative 4: Diversity Fund, and
- Initiative 5: Dean’s Discretionary/Emergency Fund.

6. Below are five “core values” the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

Core Value	Importance (100 points)
Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding	25
Development of the individual	25
Personal and professional integrity	25
Commitment to serve	13
Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives	12
Total=	100 points

7. Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit’s planning efforts receiving more points)

Planning Variables	Importance (100 points)
The mission of the university or the unit	5
Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes	5
Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback)	15
Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions)	5
Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands)	5
Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service)	5
Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges)	5
Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit	10
Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$)	10
Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.)	5
Other: National / international funding trends and available financial [grant] resources	30
Total=	100 points

8. Does your unit have a mission statement?

Yes No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here. or, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

Mission

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs is a unit within the School of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education created to serve the scholarly and creative activities of faculty and staff. The RSP mission is to facilitate the procurement of external support through research grants, contracts, and technical assistance agreements, to administer internal support for research, and to document and publicize the scholarly achievements of members of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater community.

Values

As an academic service unit, RSP is committed to the academic excellence of the University. As such, the RSP values

- A broad definition of research and creative activity that includes the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of learning, and the scholarship of engagement.
- The pursuit of knowledge in an environment that encourages free and open inquiry, academic achievement, scholarship, and creativity.
- The celebration of academic achievement.
- The importance of research experiences for undergraduate and graduate students.
- The collaborative nature of research.

Vision

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will

- Enhance the research productivity of the University.
- Increase external support of research.
- Celebrate the achievements of researchers.

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

The RSP mission, values, and vision are the guiding principles behind our strategic plan (see [Appendix 4](#), 2005 draft strategic plan).

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

9. What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?

See [Appendix 4](#), the unit's [draft strategic plan](#).

10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

See [Appendix 4](#), the unit's [draft strategic plan](#).

11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- [Principal Investigator Questionnaire](#)
- [OPR Stakeholder Survey](#)
- [Faculty Forums](#)
- [Grant Services Survey](#)

12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

The 2003 OPR Stakeholder Survey items that garnered the most responses in the "Dissatisfied" and "Somewhat Dissatisfied" categories (though only 10-15% of those responding) included faculty/staff development for grant-related service areas, disseminating information on funding opportunities, and assisting with proposal preparation. RSPRO (see question 5 response) and Faculty PREP (see question 5 response) were designed and implemented (will be implemented) to address these service areas. In addition, the unit will launch SMARTS (the Sponsored Programs Information Network—SPIN Matching And Research Transmittal Service) in Spring 2005. SMARTS is an automated daily alerts system that notifies investigators of relevant new grant programs that match self-identified key words, award types, or other search criteria. SMARTS pushes relevant funding opportunities to users electronically, saving them precious time and effort, while ensuring they are kept abreast of the latest programs in their areas of interest.

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.

- [Program evaluation](#)
- [Grant writing workshops](#)

14. Please list any partnerships your unit has developed with the community (external to the campus, at the local, national, or global-level).

- [Not Applicable](#)

STUDENT LEARNING (COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY IF YOUR UNIT HAS AS PART OF ITS MISSION OR PURPOSES THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS)

15. If your unit serves students as its primary constituency, does the unit have learning or development-related objectives relevant to its work with students? That is, does your unit expect that students will acquire certain knowledge or skill sets as a direct result of working with your unit or its programming?

Yes

No

If "yes," please list these outcomes/objectives.

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16. Does the unit use data/information to evaluate the extent to which these learning or development-related objectives are, or are not being met?

Yes

No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

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17. What specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in question #15? Please be specific.

SELF-EVALUATION

Strengths

18. List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Strength: Provision of core proposal development services

Evidence: Appendix 5 contains the responses from principal investigators on campus regarding several aspects of RSP (via the OPR Stakeholder Survey). The feedback is uniformly positive with Item #2 (assistance in following sponsor guidelines and completing required forms (budgets, assurances, certifications, etc.)) and Item #4 (efficiency of proposal preparation, routing, and/or mailing) being particular strengths of the office. Responses to the open-ended item are also positive. As one respondent commented: "Keep doing what you're doing. RSP is perhaps the most organized, efficient, and on the ball office on campus. I cannot think of any way it needs improvement."

Strength: The office is committed to a client-centered approach to faculty development, RSP service is customized to address individual faculty/staff needs.

- **Evidence:** Anecdotal evidence from 2004 Faculty Forums indicates a high level of satisfaction with individualized service. The 2003 OPR report further stated “The office wins high marks from faculty for its professional services in preparing grants. Both the self-study and faculty interviews concur RSP has been essential in ‘demystifying’ the grant writing process and doing everything possible to ensure the success of the grant projects. As one faculty member commented, RSP ‘does what it takes to make things happen.’”

Strength: The unit is committed to campus compliance through its administrative responsibilities to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

Evidence: OPR Stakeholder Survey feedback ([Appendix 5](#)) about the IRB and IACUC especially is very positive.

Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit’s efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it’s important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

Specific Concern: Enhance and develop responsive services related to faculty/staff development, disseminating grants information, and assisting with proposal preparation.

Supporting Evidence: The 2003 OPR Stakeholder Survey items that garnered the most responses in the “Dissatisfied” and “Somewhat Dissatisfied” categories (though only 10-15% of those responding) included “faculty/staff development for grant-related service areas,” “disseminating information on funding opportunities,” and “assisting with proposal preparation.”

Recommended Actions: RSPPro (see question 5 response) and Faculty PREP (see question 5 response) were designed and implemented (will be implemented) to address these service areas. In addition, the unit will launch SMARTS (the Sponsored Programs Information Network—SPIN Matching And Research Transmittal Service) in Spring 2005. SMARTS is an automated daily alerts system that notifies investigators of relevant new grant programs that match self-identified key words, award types, or other search criteria. SMARTS pushes relevant funding opportunities to users electronically, saving them precious time and effort, while ensuring they are kept abreast of the latest programs in their areas of interest.